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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010055

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2015

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM CO EC

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT SANTOS ELATED ABOUT REELECTION;  
CONCERNED ABOUT CHAVEZ

Classified By: DCM Milton Drucker; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Director of Andean Affairs Philip French and DCM Drucker called on Vice President Francisco Santos and MFA Acting Vice Minister for Bilateral Affairs Mauricio Gonzalez separately on October 19. Santos, speaking minutes after the announcement that the Constitutional Court approved reelection, urged the United States to continue strong support for Colombia, saying that, with U.S. help, Colombia could be a different place in 2010, after Uribe's second term as President. Santos said his goal was to work with the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to create Colombian institutions capable of handling human rights issues on their own so that the U.N. presence could gradually be decreased. Santos also expressed concern about the growing influence of Chavez in the region. Acting Vice Minister Gonzalez, who covers Latin American and Caribbean issues, focused on regional issues. Gonzalez said a politically weak Defensor del Pueblo is the motivating force behind Ecuador's case against aerial spraying of coca crops at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). Gonzalez said last week's Ibero-American Summit in Salamanca was more challenging than expected. The GOC would have preferred to call the FARC, ELN and AUC "terrorist groups," but was satisfied with the decision to label them "illegal armed groups who commit terrorist acts" in the final declaration.

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Reelection: Colombia Has a Chance Now  
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¶2. (C) Vice President Santos was elated by the news that the Constitutional Court approved reelection. Minutes after the decision was announced, he urged the United States to continue its strong support for Colombia. Santos said if Uribe is reelected, Colombia will be a different place in 2010, but the United States would be essential in reaching that goal. According to Santos, with a comparatively small investment of resources, the United States had the opportunity to help Colombia get on the right track for the foreseeable future.

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Need for a New Plan to Counter  
Growing Chavez Influence in the Region  
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¶3. (C) Santos said Chavez has &infiltrated<sup>8</sup> many countries in both the Andean and Caribbean regions, demonstrating that the current containment policy is not effective. Santos,s concerns were heightened after a recent meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, who said Chavez is using both bribes and threats to infiltrate the political and labor arenas. Santos urged the United States, Great Britain, Spain and the Netherlands ) parties who are concerned about the growth of Chavez,s influence ) to start thinking about a new, more aggressive approach to Chavez. WHA/AND Director French replied that Chavez feeds off any U.S. comments on Venezuela posturing and suggested the need for a Latin American-led effort against Chavez, to garner wider European support. DCM Drucker agreed. Santos did not reply.

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Santos: U.N. Must Work With Colombia  
to Create Human Rights Institutions  
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¶4. (C) Santos expressed frustration with the growing size of the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogota. He expressed frustration that little progress is being made in creating Colombian institutions capable of dealing with human rights issues while the U.N. mission continues to grow. Santos said that the GOC knows that it must improve its human rights record and that it needs help. However, he believes that the U.N. does not work with Colombia on human rights issues so much as joins the chorus

of NGO detractors. Santos said he spoke to High Commissioner Louise Arbour frankly about these issues while in Europe last month. He was disturbed that she did not know the situation in Colombia and was unfamiliar with important aspects of the Law of Justice and Peace. Santos said the GOC plans to renegotiate the mandate of the office, which runs out in October 2006. He noted that, as the GOC had invited the UNHCHR into the country ten years ago, a new mandate would not require approval by the Commission on Human Rights. Santos,s goal is to create an exit strategy for the office of the High Commissioner.

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Meeting with MFA Acting Vice Minister  
Ecuador: IACtHR Case is Motivated by Defensor del Pueblo  
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¶5. (C) According the Acting Vice Minister Gonzalez, the Ecuadorian complaint before the IAHCtHR about aerial spraying along the border is an emotional issue, colored by political instability in Ecuador and motivated by the Defensor del Pueblo. He said the highest levels of the GOE understand that fumigation is critical to Colombia and that glyphosate is not harmful to human health. He said the two sides have had numerous technical meetings on aerial spraying and that initial Ecuadorian reactions were positive. He blamed the current IAHCtHR case on an overzealous Defensor del Pueblo and not the GOE. In his opinion, the questionable election of the Defensor has motivated him to bring the case before the IAHCtHR to bolster his legitimacy.

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Uribe,s Victory - of Sorts - in Salamanca  
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¶6. (C) Turning to the topic of last week's Ibero-American Summit in Salamanca, Gonzalez said the Summit was very complicated and not the unmitigated success reported in the Colombian papers. Colombia was surprised at opposition from other members of the Rio Group on the issue of calling illegal armed groups in Colombia &terrorists.<sup>8</sup> He said the GOC was also surprised at the ambiguous position of the

Spanish hosts, who had supported the &terrorist8 designation after the four party (Colombia, Spain, Venezuela and Brazil) meeting on this issue in Ciudad Guyana, Venezuela earlier this year. After much effort on the part of President Uribe, the Summit participants compromised, calling these groups &illegal armed groups that have committed terrorist acts8 in the final declaration. Gonzalez said the GOC is satisfied with this result.

¶7. (U) This message has been cleared by WHA/AND Director Philip French.

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